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EMPLOYMENT TIMES

Fluency: Leading in the Midst of Change

Some of you may remember the 1985 hit song, "We are the World," produced by Quincy Jones and an inspiring cast of musicians who sang about working together, past our differences. Or perhaps you remember the tremendously successful United Colours of Benetton ad campaign back in the 1980s, celebrating young faces of every colour, signaling the look and feel of a world without borders. Media images like these showed us the world and nation, as we wanted ourselves to be -- pictures and soundbites of many races cooperating, communicating, and sharing opportunity and fortune.

If only it were that simple. Almost 25 years later, we are still struggling to make that vision real -- in our business practices, in the running of our cities, and, now, in the context of great cultural, demographic, and economic changes brought on by global-

As 21st century leaders, you know that building, guiding, and sustaining truly diverse communities is workforces have changed faster than at any point in history -- job relocation, mobile commerce and ease of Harvard Graduate travel have changed our cities' democontinue to influence and change the



culture of our cities. Young families and children supplant the aging baby boomer generation, again, changing the character and priorities of a community.

At the same time as we become a tremendously difficult work. Over more diverse, more prosperous the last decade, city populations and nation, our cities have also become more segregated. In fact, studies from SUNY Albany, UCLA, and the School of Education have reported that segregraphics quickly and often. gation of our children has worsened Immigrant and new communities over the last decade, even though we nomic shifts? How do leaders create live in more integrated areas. As new-

along racial, ethnic, or other groupaffiliated lines. Changing demographics and the growth of ethnic enclaves have made race awareness and identity politics an effective means of voicing the needs of some of our cities' otherwise marginalized

Amid all of this, civic and corporate leaders are confronted with difficult choices every day. Worthy projects from different community sectors must compete for limited resources. Appointments and commissions must be assigned in ways that satisfy all the interests represented in our constituency groups, assuring each of them adequate representation. From time to time, leaders also face crisis-fueled change, forcing them to guide their communities quickly through controversies.

Does this sound stressful? Indeed, scenes of a diverse community can be those of chaos, fiefdoms, even balkanizing, as some futurists and scholars predict. Alternatively, some see these times as momentous, opening the door to the grandest and most inspiring of challenges.

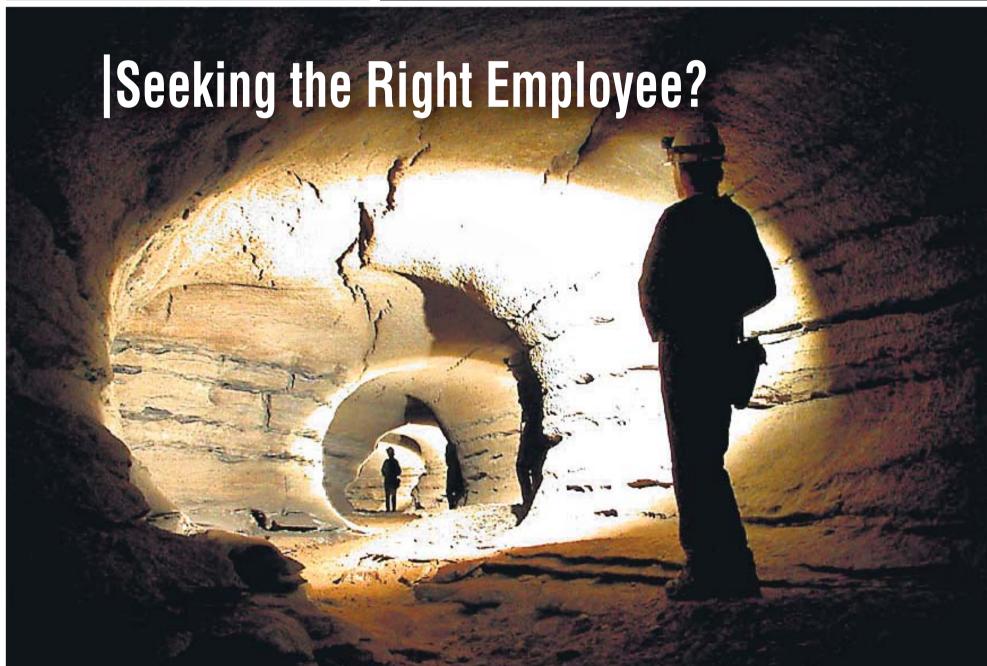
How does one lead a community, whether local or global team, in the midst of huge demographic and ecocommunities where all constituents

comer groups grow in critical mass, feel included, counted and equally so does the tendency to organize receiving of the opportunities offered by a community? And how do we have difficult conversations that turn our best intentions into action and accountability, not only from our leaders, but from ourselves?

The answers to these questions are certainly many and varied, depending on a community's specific composition and the issues it faces. Nevertheless, one of the most important skills of a leader through changing times will be a skill set of cultural fluency. This is not necessarily language fluency, as that term is usually used. Fluency is the skill set of understanding and being understood by past apparent borders. To know one's constituents and address their needs effectively, 21st century leaders must practice and hone their fluency

Over the past few years, I've talked to many fluent leaders: opinion shapers, thought leaders in business and communities, artists, teachers, media creatives, all who understand that their ultimate success depends on how deeply and quickly they can identify common ground and transcend boundaries between their constituents. Fluent leaders are servant leaders who willingly assume the place of liaison, the diplomatic negotiator, the arbiter of compromise.

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More Fun at Work: Is it another fringe benefit for highly paid employees?

The best paid employees get the highest material benefits from working, but it also seems that they have the richest social lives.

A study published in a recent issue of the journal Social Science Quarterly found that highly paid workers were more likely to participate in social activities with co-workers. The highly paid also reported greater cohesion and solidarity among their colleagues. "The social attractions of the workplace are strongest for those who are already rewarded with the biggest paychecks," said Randy Hodson, author of the study and professor of sociology at Ohio State

According to Hodson, highly-paid employees tend to have jobs with more freedom and autonomy in which they can interact with their co-workers and develop friendships. They are also more likely to work in teams in which interaction with others is both necessary and encouraged.

On the other hand, lower-paid workers - for example, those in manufacturing - are likely to spend more time working with things, rather than people, and may not have the time to interact with their col-

The research was based on a detailed analysis of 124 book-length studies of employees in a variety of workplace settings. Occupations included meat packers, taxi drivers, lawyers, doctors and people from a wide range of other jobs. Hodson and three graduate students organized

and coded information from all of these books to measure the degree and type of social interaction at a variety of workplaces from around the world. Hodson was then able to build a data set that allowed quantitative, statistical comparisons of different workplaces and different kinds of employees.

Results suggest that when people develop friendships at work, it is because they enjoy their work and co-workers, said Hodson.

"It is the carrot of having an enjoyable and wellpaid job that leads to rich social lives at work, not the stick of worrying about job loss," Hodson said. "But of course, only some people are offered the carrot." It appeared that women tended to report less rich social lives at work than men. The researchers found that this was because men tended to have jobs that made workplace friendships more likely. When women had jobs in which social interaction with coworkers was common, they tended to report similar on-the-job social lives to their male colleagues.

According to Hodson this research suggests that for many highly paid workers, there is not a conflict in which they feel forced to spend time away from their families in order to be at work.

"For people who have well-paying, interesting jobs, the workplace is a positive attraction that provides meaning and fulfillment in their lives," Hodson

"The friendships and camaraderie they have with their co-workers is part of the appeal of work. For these lucky employees, the workplace is a strong competitor for their time with home and home life." Workaholism, then, may be partly the result of employees who truly enjoy their work and co-workers, and not necessarily a result of fearing for their jobs, Hodson said.

The study was supported by the National Science

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